(b) whether they have submitted any demand in this regard to the Union Government;

(c) if so, what are their main demands and arguments; and

(d) what is the Centre's response to the demand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The main demands and arguments of the Greater Cooch Behar People's Association are (i) Merger of erstwhile Cooch Behar State with West Bengal from 1.1.1950 is illegal and unconstitutional, (ii) Formation of Greater Cooch Behar State comprising the Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North and South Dinajpur, districts of West Bengal and undivided Goalpara district of Assam, (iii) Election to Legislative Assembly should not be held in Cooch Behar, since the merger of Cooch Behar in the State of West Bengal is illegal, (iv) Implement the promises made in the merger agreement between the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and the Government of India, and (v) Form a caretaker Ministry immediately for administration of Cooch Behar.

(d) The Government has examined the demands. It appears that there is nothing illegal or unconstitutional in the Instrument of Accession or the Merger Agreement, signed by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar in accordance with the Indian Independence Act, 1947 read with the relevant provision of the Government of India Act, 1935. The merger of the State of Cooch Behar with West Bengal from 1.1.1950 under the States Merger (West Bengal) Order 1949 also appears to be legal and valid. Further, no other issue in the Merger Agreement remains unimplemented. However, the present dissatisfaction seems to emanate from the economic backwardness of the people of Cooch Behar. Union Government has requested the State Government to take measures to address the issue of economic backwardness of the area, both in the long term and in the short term.

Human rights situation in States

1567. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that human rights situation continues to be grim;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the record of most States on this count is very poor;

(d) if so, the details thereof during the last one year;

(e) whether it is also a fact that the police atrocities and custodial torture have not ebbed; slum-dwellers are kicked out of their hutments and tribal people are displaced;

(f) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(g) the steps to be taken by Government to improve the situation in coordination with the State Governments especially in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (g) Government lays great importance on protection of human rights and prevention of human rights violations in the country. The Central Government has issued advisories from time to time to all State Governments to avoid violation of human rights. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has also been issuing guidelines on various human rights to the State Governments for prevention of violation of human rights. "Human Rights" has been included as a subject in the training curriculum for policemen. Government has also issued guidelines to all the State Government and UT Administrations from time to time bringing out important aspects which the police should bear in mind while dealing with public. These include observance of a law, using method of persuassion, advice and warning before application of force, to be courteous and well mannered particularly while dealing with women and avoid committing abuse of their authority etc. As per reports received from the State Governments and UT Administrations by the NHRC, the number of deaths in police custody has declined from 183 in the year 2002-2003 to 136 in the year 2004-2005. In view of the above situation, it cannot be stated that human rights situation in the country is grim. As regards displacement of slum dwellers and tribal people, these are matters coming under "Police" and "Public Order", which are State subjects listed in List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution and it is for the State Governments to take appropriate action under the law, keeping in mind the human rights of the people affected.